

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Northeastern Mental Health/Dakota House  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2005-2006**

**Team Members:** Rita Pettigrew and Chris Sargent

**Dates of On Site Visit:** October 31, 2005

**Date of Report:** November 23, 2005

---

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

---

<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
--

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys

- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

### **Meets requirements**

Dakota House is an agency and, therefore, is not required to implement child find activities as a school district would be required to do. A system is in place for assessing all children as they are admitted to the program.

Dakota House is an agency and, therefore, is not required to implement Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (ARSD 24:05:32) requirements of involving children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools. Because Dakota House is private school, it does not place children in other private facilities. However, in collaboration with the local education agency (LEA), Dakota House ensures that special education and related services are administered in accordance with the child's IEP at no cost to parent.

Dakota House uses data-based decision-making procedures to review and analyze data to determine if the agency is making progress toward the state's performance goals and indicators. Dakota House does not suspend or expel students from its program.

Dakota House ensure they employ or contract with an adequate supply of personnel who are appropriately supervised, and fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities. Two Special Education teachers are contracted each year. Four support teachers are hired and assist in teaching students at Dakota House/School. The school district is hoping to add another full time special educator for the school year of 2005-2006. In-service training is provided to all staff throughout the year. Personnel development needs are discussed on a weekly basis in a supervisory meeting.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records

- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded children are placed at Dakota House without charge to the parents/guardians. Dakota House does not suspend or expel students from its program.

#### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

#### **Meets requirements**

File reviews indicate Dakota House provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a student as part of an evaluation or reevaluation. Dakota House ensures that comprehensive evaluations are conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff and includes input from parents/guardians/surrogates. Functional assessments are completed and summarized in a written report. Data reviewed by Dakota House concluded the evaluation or reevaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements.

The Individual Education team considers evaluation findings when determining whether the student meets the criteria for a particular disability category. Dakota House ensures through file reviews that evaluation and reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility, with the exception of transition evaluation.

#### **Needs improvement**

The agency concluded from file reviews that input from parents is needed when the evaluation team determines the nature and extent of the child's evaluation needs.

### **Out of Compliance**

The agency concluded from file reviews that the area of transition evaluation does not meet requirements.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Three, Appropriate Evaluation, meets the requirements, with the exception of determination of eligibility procedures. See information under: Out of Compliance. Since the self assessment was completed, the agency has started to administer transition evaluations as appropriate. The review team validated transition evaluation as in compliance.

#### **Needs improvement**

The review team addresses parental input into the evaluation process under: Out of Compliance.

Upon completing the administration of tests and other evaluation materials as required, the individual education program team and other individuals required determine whether the student is a student with a disability, as defined in regulations. The school district needs to provide a copy of the evaluation report and the documentation of determination of eligibility to the parent. File reviews and staff interviews indicated transition assessment results have not been consistently summarized into a written report form, which resulted in parents not receiving a copy. Reviewers were able to verify the most recent transition assessment completed did have a written report, which was given to the parent. Staff interviews indicated improvement will continue in this area.

### **Out of compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:25:04:02. Determination of needed evaluation data**

As part of an evaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine whether the child has a disability, and determine whether the child needs special education and related services, as appropriate, shall: review existing evaluation data on the child, including: Evaluations and information provided by the parents of the child; current classroom-based assessments and observations; and observations by teachers and related services providers. File reviews completed by the team indicated parental input into the evaluation process was not documented. Staff interview concluded they were not familiar with this requirement.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded Dakota House ensures parents are informed of their parental rights under IDEA. The agency ensures parents/guardians/surrogates are informed in their native language or another mode of communication (if necessary) of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought.

Dakota House has policies and procedures to appoint and train a surrogate parent for a child with a disability when a parent cannot be located to ensure the rights of a child are protected. Based on the agency's comprehensive plan, parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services are provided with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education.

Dakota House has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions that ensure compliance, which can be found in the comprehensive plan. In addition, the agency's comprehensive plan has policies and procedures in place for responding to requests for due process that ensure compliance.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Four, Procedural Safeguards, meets requirements, with the exception of consent for evaluation. See information under: Out of Compliance

#### **Out of compliance**

##### **ARSD 24:05:30:04. Prior notice and parent consent**

Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related services. Consent was not obtained for evaluations administered to students in three files reviewed. For example, a behavior evaluation was administered but was not included on the prior notice/consent signed by the parent, and a transition evaluation was administered without prior notice/consent from the parents.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

### **Meets requirements**

Based on file reviews completed by staff, the agency ensures written notice is provided for all IEP meetings and includes all required content. Dakota House has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student.

File reviews indicated to the steering committee that the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities. Based on file reviews, Dakota House ensures the IEP contains all required content. Also based on file reviews, Dakota House ensures transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests to prepare them for post school activities.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program meets requirements, except in the areas of present level of performance and transition. See information under: Out of Compliance

#### **Needs improvement**

The review team determined that the agency does not consistently address individualized education program content requirements for goals and objectives. Goals and objectives written on students' IEPs did not consistently contain: 1. conditions (i.e. procedures used to present information, i.e. when, where, how) 2. performance (i.e. specific observable skill the student is expected to accomplish); or 3. criteria (i.e. how well must the skill be done and how often to acquire).

#### **Out of compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:27:13.02 Transition Services and ARSD 24:05:27:01.03(1) Content of individualized education program (IEP)**

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability, designed within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student with a disability to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's strengths, preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

The agency has recently started to administer transition assessment to students of transition age. The present levels of performance should be based upon the functional assessment information. In two of two files reviewed in which students were sixteen years old or older, transition was not adequately addressed in the student's IEP present level of performance. The PLOP lacked the student's strengths, weakness/needs regarding school to secondary activities. The student's PLOP did not state how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. The course of study did not state the specific electives. Transition services and activities need to be utilized as a planning device to help ensure the students achieved their desired outcomes for employment and independent living. The student's IEP did not have a coordinated set of activities which addressed the individual student's needs.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

### **Meets requirements**

Dakota House students are served in the least restrictive environment with the supports necessary for successful participation.

### **Validation Results**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the agency is meeting the requirements for Principle Six, Least Restrictive Environment.